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Casey's smart (and rich), but does he run a fit

TINKER, TINKER, TINKER

BY MORTON KONDRACKI

UNITED STATES intelligence apparently had an idea that the so-called Party of God, an Iranian-connected, Syrian-protected Shiite Moslem group that car-bombed the U.S. Embassy in Beirut last April, was planning an attack on U.S. Marines. But U.S. intelligence did not have agents inside the group and therefore could not warn with precision that it was planning the truck-bombing that killed more than 230 Marines on October 23. U.S. intelligence knew, too, that Cuba and the Soviet Union were militarizing Grenada, but again the United States had no intelligence agents on the island and underestimated Cuban troop strength. The U.S. had not penetrated Maurice Bishop's New Jewel Movement, and did not know that Bishop's colleagues were planning to oust and kill him. And when Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica reported to the White House press on October 25 that "we noted with great interest the movements between Soviet Embassies and known activists" prior to Bishop's assassination, it also was news to White House policymakers.

On the other hand, the Central Intelligence Agency did predict correctly that the Soviet Union would not invade Poland in 1981, but would crack down through Polish authorities instead. Using its superb technical capabilities, U.S. intelligence was able to develop a precise analysis of how Korean Air Lines' Flight 007 was tracked by the Soviet Union, lost, found again, and shot down. And, several months before Leonid Brezhnev's death, the director of Central Intelligence, William Casey, reported to President Reagan that Brezhnev likely would not be succeeded by a collective leadership, as agency analysts had concluded. "Chernenko peaked too soon," Casey wrote Reagan in a memo. "Kirilenko

faded in the stretch bet money, I'd say across the board."

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DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

zier was kidnapped by the Red Brigades in Italy, the C.I.A. dug hard to discover who had him and where; but U.S. officials say that in general, journalists like Claire Sterling have put together a better picture of international terrorist networks than the C.I.A. When Turkish gunman Mohammed Ali Agca shot the Pope, they say, the President found out more about Soviet and Bulgarian involvement from *Reader's Digest* than from U.S. intelligence.

The C.I.A. can't know everything, but the Republican Party correctly declared in its 1980 election platform that "the United States requires a realistic assessment of the threats it faces" and "must have the best intelligence capability in the world." The platform said, "Republicans pledge this for the United States." Three years into this Republican Administration, the United States certainly has a better intelligence capability than it did in 1980—it could hardly fail in that—but overall it is still far from the best in the world. Can William J. Casey make it so? Well, he gets credit for trying—even from his adversaries—but there's reason to doubt that he can.

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